



Water Transfers

Lead Department: Water
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Background

The San Diego Water Department services 1.2 million customers, including the largest concentration of military bases in the United States. It is one of the ten largest water suppliers in the nation – providing 206 MGD per day. By the year 2030, the City's population and economic growth is projected to increase water demands by about 55 million gallons a day (MGD) or 25 percent over 2002 levels.

The City presently imports approximately 90% of its water supply from northern California and the Colorado River. Local reservoirs owned and operated by the City supply about 10 to 15 percent of need. The City's Long-Range Water Resources Plan, adopted by the San Diego City Council on December 9, 2002, calls for a flexible strategy for the next 30 years, implemented in three 10-year phases. The principal strategies are:

- Conservation
- Recycled water
- Groundwater storage and treatment
- Water transfers
- Desalination

Water Transfers are a relatively new tool employed in California for meeting local water supply goals. Transfers are heralded by many as one of the major water supply solutions of the future. However, many institutional barriers continue to prohibit easy transfers from Northern to Southern California. Energy costs for transferring water is a critical long-term issue for maintaining the viability of water transfers as energy-demanding pumping is an integral component of the process.

The year 2010 goal for water transfers is 5,000 acre-feet annually. State legislation is needed to assure that entities, such as the City of San Diego, have the opportunity to arrange for water transfers that are:

- Able to move efficiently through the transportation system with adequate storage systems.
- Supported by state-sponsored technical assistance for buyers and sellers.
- Supported by a reliable supply of reasonably priced energy.

State Strategies

- Sponsor legislation that provides the mechanism for effective partnering of areas that experience water surplus with urban areas such as San Diego to effect water transfers that improve the efficiency of water storage and use in California, such as:
 - Guidelines for assuring maximum public acceptance of transfers as a win-win opportunity.
 - State assistance in mitigating environmental impacts.
 - State incentives for entities that improve water efficiency through transfer and storage programs.
- Sponsor legislation to assure proper and balanced wheeling costs for the use of water transportation facilities to improve the efficiency of water storage and use.

Federal Strategies

- Support measures such as the Energy Bill that maintain affordable prices for reliable supplies of energy.

Overall Strategy

- No legislation will be sought in calendar year 2004
- City of San Diego will continue to identify spot opportunities for water transfer agreements
- City of San Diego will, through statewide water organizations, explore possible partnerships for future legislative proposals

Supporters & Possible partners

- Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA)
- MWD and CWA